

Book reviews

Gonococcal infection: current topics in infection. Edited by G F Brooks and Elizabeth A Donegan, 1985. Edward Arnold, London. Pp 239. Price £30.

This is a welcome addition to the Current topics in infection series. The editors are, respectively, professor of laboratory medicine and assistant clinical professor of laboratory medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. The stated goal of the book is to review in a complete and concise manner the current knowledge of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* and how it causes disease. This is tackled in four parts.

Part I deals with the classification and biology of *N gonorrhoeae*. The first chapter on taxonomy, colony phenotypes, and disease is short (five pages) and includes a rather confusing table on the terminology of *N gonorrhoeae* colony morphology. Such detail at this stage of the book will be of little value to the average reader. Much of the material in this chapter could have been readily incorporated into other areas of the book. Chapter 2 gives a concise summary of the gonococcal cell envelope and forms a useful background to later chapters dealing with pathogenesis and immune response. Chapter 3 on gonococcal physiology and metabolism is contributed by Stephen Morse. This is an excellent chapter, rich in detail but written in a way that enables the reader to relate the physiology and metabolism of the gonococcus to factors such as growth, identification, and pathogenesis, which are so important to rational approaches to the control of infection. Janne Cannon gives a useful synopsis of methods of genetic exchange and genetic loci in relation to surface structure, antibiotic resistance, and pathogenicity. The final chapter in this section builds on the earlier chapters and reviews current knowledge of the pathogenesis and immunology of gonococcal infection. It is surprising that in 20 pages packed with 179 references no mention is made of "infectious units". Consideration of factors of symptomatic as opposed to asymptomatic infection was another neglected area.

Part II covers the clinical manifestations, with separate chapters devoted to uncomplicated infection, salpingitis, disseminated infection, and infections in children. In the chapter on salpingitis there are some first class scanning electron micrographs showing the interaction between gonococci and fallopian tube tissue. The United States Public Health Service recommendations for treatment are outlined and discussed in the

individual chapters, rather than having a separate chapter devoted to treatment. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations are mentioned in passing, with a statement that they were not available for publication when the chapter was written. (I obtained a copy of the WHO's *Current treatments in the control of sexually transmitted diseases* in 1983.) Under the heading of gonococcal ophthalmia, "ophthalmia" occurs three times before "ophthalmia" is reverted to. In discussing pharyngeal infection it is stated that "In England, Noble and coworkers reported an incidence of 1.3% for pharyngeal infection in clinic patients." Noble and coworkers in fact reported from Lexington, Kentucky, United States of America. Overall this section has a much stronger leaning towards practice in the United States of America than in England. Two examples are provided by the greater emphasis on epidemiological treatment and the decreased emphasis on the need for culture from men with positive smears.

Part III is concerned with the clinical laboratory and gonococcal infection, and in three chapters covers laboratory methods, typing, and serological diagnosis. The methods section is disappointing and could have been more up to date. No mention is made of monoclonal antibodies, and the increasingly important area of antigen detection is dealt with in only six lines. The misuse of sugar "fermentation" is perpetuated (as members of the genus *Neisseria* metabolise sugars oxidatively, terms such as sugar degradation or utilisation are more appropriate). Problems of vancomycin sensitive gonococci are discussed, yet lincomycin is not considered as an alternative selective agent.

The chapter on typing contributed by Joan Knapp is brief but gives a good overview of the various methods available. The many Swedish studies on serological classification, however, deserved greater coverage. A short addendum makes reference to the use of monoclonal antibodies for classifying gonococci into serovariants (serovars). The chapter on serological diagnosis provides a clear summary of the problems associated with setting end points to define a positive test to diagnose gonococcal infection.

In six short chapters, Part IV covers epidemiology, public health, and health care and control. The chapter on epidemiology gives a broad outline of the global situation and sets the scene for the subsequent chapters. The topics, such as prevention and control, organisation of sexually transmitted

diseases (STD) clinics, clinical practice, and education remind us of many of the very real social and logistical problems associated with gonococcal infection. These chapters, which are considered mainly from the American viewpoint, make interesting reading and should help the reader to perceive more clearly the relevant problems of diagnosis and control in relation to their own locality. The penultimate chapter identifies current problems and pinpoints potentially fruitful research areas, and the final chapter reviews progress on the development of a gonococcal vaccine: the most recent reference cited in this chapter was published in 1982.

The overall impression is of a concise book that is easy to read. The breadth of coverage makes this book of value to all health care staff concerned with gonococcal infection. Some chapters are more valuable than others, but selective reading is possible as each chapter is designed to stand on its own.

H Young

AIDS: an introduction to diagnosis and management. By Raymond P Brett, 1985. Graves Medical Audiovisual Library, Chelmsford, Essex, England. Cassette of 23 minutes duration, no slides. Price £7.50.

Management in a medical sense implies diagnosis and treatment, and the title of this cassette lecture therefore contains a tautology; this is a poor omen. In fact, this short lecture on the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) contains little of practical use about diagnosis, and in four or five playings of the tape I have yet to find any mention of treatment. Though the cassette contains little suggested by the title, it is at least an interesting historical guide to AIDS, but the story fails to reach full contemporary status.

This cassette covers the history of AIDS, from its recognition in 1981 (misquoted in the cassette as 1978) to the introduction of screening by the blood transfusion service in October 1985. Though the aetiological agent of AIDS is fully accepted worldwide as being human T lymphotropic virus type III or lymphadenopathy virus (HTLV-III/LAV), Dr Brett accords this new virus only the status of a possible contender for the role of causative agent, and in fact ranks it third after the "wrath of God" and "antigenic overload caused by multiple venereal diseases in promiscuous homosexual men". The discus-